

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINR, YO, UR

SUBJECT: SOVIET NAVAL PRESENCE IN YUGOSLAVIA: GORSHKOV
VISIT

REF: USNATO 4569

1. SOVIET INTEREST IN ACCESS TO YUGOSLAV PORT FACILITIES,
LONG AN IMPORTANT SOVIET AIM, HAS APPARENTLY INTENSIFIED
AFTER THE LOSS OF EGYPTIAN FACILITIES LAST APRIL. WE HAVE
OBSERVED A RELATIVELY HIGH LEVEL OF ACTIVITY IN AND AROUND
TIVAT IN RECENT WEEKS. THERE HAVE ALSO BEEN UNCONFIRMED R'-
PORTS SUGGESTING POSSIBLE YUGOSLAV CONCESSIONS TO THE SOVIETS
PERHAPS IN BARGAINING RELATED TO THE ECPC. SOVIET NAVY
COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF GORSHKOV'S VISIT, WHICH BEGAN
AUGUST 18 AND WILL REPORTEDLY INCLUDE TOURS OF ADRIATIC

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PORT FACILITIES, LENDS SUBSTANCE TO REPORTS OF INCREASED

SOVIET PRESSURE.

2. AS OF THE WEEK OF AUGUST 16, FOUR SOVIET SHIPS WERE REPORTEDLY IN YUGOSLAV PORTS -- A FOXTROT CLASS SUBMARINE, A SUBMARINE TENDER, A STORES SHIP AND A HEAVY BUOY TENDER. THEIR PRESENCE DOES NOT VIOLATE YUGOSLAV LAWS ON REPAIR OF FOREIGN NAVAL VESSELS WHICH, AMONG OTHER THINGS, LIMIT THE NUMBER OF SHIPS TO TWO OF THE SAME NATION UNDER REPAIR AT

ANY ONE TIME AT ANY ONE PORT. FOREIGN COMBATANTS CAN BE REPAIRED ONLY IN A YUGOSLAV MILITARY SHIP YARD, AND TIVAT IS THE ONLY PORT CURRENTLY SO DESIGNATED. WHEN THEY WERE GRANTED LIMITED ACCESS IN 1973, THE SOVIETS HAD APPARENTLY ACCEPTED VARIOUS OTHER RESTRICTIONS, SUCH AS THE REQUIRED USE OF YUGOSLAV PERSONNEL AND MATERIAL AND A SIX-MONTH DEADLINE FOR COMPLETING REPAIRS. THEY DELIVERED A LARGE FLOATING DRYDOCK TO TIVAT LAST YEAR, THEREBY INCREASING ITS CAPABILITY, AND SINCE 1974 SEVERAL SOVIET DIESEL SUBMARINES HAVE UNDERGONE OVERHAULS THERE. NEVERTHELESS, SOVIET ACCESS TO TIVAT IS STILL MUCH LESS THAN WHAT THEY ENJOYED AT ALEXANDRIA. A DISTURBING NOTE SUGGESTING POSSIBLE SOVIET SUBTERFUGE AROSE LAST MONTH, HOWEVER, WHEN AT LEAST ONE SOVIET VESSEL TRIED TO MASQUERADE AS A MERCHANTMAN IN PORT AFTER HAVING REPORTEDLY USED NAVAL CALL SIGNS AND ENSIGN AT SEA.

3. ONE MAJOR LEVER FOR THE SOVIETS IN GAINING LESS RESTRICTED ACCESS WOULD BE CONTINUED YUGOSLAV DEPENDENCE ON SOVIET-PRODUCED ARMAMENTS. THIS FACTOR MIGHT DIMINISH IF YUGOSLAVIA CONTINUES TO IMPROVE ITS OWN CAPACITY TO PRODUCE MODERN ARMAMENTS. GREATER YUGOSLAV ACCESS TO THE WESTERN ARMS INDUSTRIES COULD ALSO OFFSET DEPENDENCE ON THE SOVIET UNION. FURTHERMORE THE YUGOSLAVS MIGHT SEEK TO USE ANY CONCESSIONS GRANTED TO THE SOVIETS AS JUSTIFICATION FOR FURTHER PURCHASES OF WESTERN ARMS.

4. FOR NOW, THE YUGOSLAVS APPEAR RESOLVED TO MAINTAIN FUNDAMENTAL CONTROLS OVER THE FOREIGN USE OF THEIR PORTS. THERE HAVE BEEN NO SUGGESTIONS THAT THEY ARE PREPARED TO GRANT TO THE SOVIETS ANYTHING APPROACHING PERMANENT BASE
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FACILITIES. MOSCOW'S INTEREST IS UNLIKELY TO DIMINISH, HOWEVER, AND ITS PRESSURES CAN BE EXPECTED TO INCREASE AS THE TITO SUCCESSION QUESTION UNFOLDS. FOR OUR PART, WE HAVE MADE KNOWN TO THE YUGOSLAVS OUR CONCERN ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF INCREASED SOVIET USE OF THEIR PORTS.

5. YOU MAY DRAW ON ALL OF THE FOREGOING IN POLADS DISCUSSION. KISSINGER

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NNN

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